

Statement
Chairman Tom Davis
Committee on Government Reform
“Black Men and Boys In The District Of Columbia And Their Impact On The Future
Of The Black Family.”

September 12, 2003

Good morning. A quorum being present, the Committee on Government Reform will come to order. Welcome to today's hearing on Black men and boys in the District of Columbia and their impact on the future of the Black family.

Although we've seen some remarkable progress over the past several decades, there remain significant socioeconomic gaps between African Americans and other ethnicities. Our hearing today will address matters of particular concern to African American males in the District of Columbia and other metropolitan areas.

The statistics are startling. African American males are seven times more likely to be murdered than their Caucasian counterparts. The African-American rate of HIV/AIDS infection is five times higher than that for Caucasians. African Americans comprise 38% of AIDS cases reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The unemployment rate for African Americans is at 10.1%.

These statistics should concern us all. I hope our witnesses will be able to shed some light on their underlying causes, and what the public and private sectors can do about it.

How can we expect African American males to dream high when they are fraught with disappointment, with violence, and with low expectations? We cannot. I hope to see increased opportunities for the participation of African Americans in the political process as voters and candidates. There are countless African American men with the potential to become leaders of the District of Columbia and cities and states around the country – but too few of them get to the point where they can exercise that potential.

It is important for the community and the government to foster an environment in which they can succeed and positively influence the course of events pertinent to African Americans, and to us all. We must remember that the boys of today will become tomorrow's fathers.

It is our goal to identify problems affecting African-Americans and build awareness about these issues. I applaud the efforts of the Commission and hope today's hearing will help the Commission develop an action plan that will benefit the African American community.

I would also like to thank Congresswoman Norton for her work with the District of Columbia Commission on Black Men and Boys and other issues in the District of Columbia.

We have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us. I look forward to hearing testimony from our witnesses and thank them for sharing their experiences and suggestions with us.